



MEGAN HELBERG

2020 NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Megan thoroughly enjoys learning through experience, which has been the catalyst to take her all across the world. No matter where her travels take her, Megan proudly lives in rural Nebraska where she teaches English to 8th, 11th, and 12th grade students at Burwell Public Schools. Megan grew up on a ranch in the Sandhills; there were ten people in her graduating class. Holocaust and genocide education is a passion for Mrs. Helberg and she feels strongly about providing opportunities for her students that includes glimpses into various cultures and ways of life. In 2013, Megan received a Fund for Teachers grant. She used this opportunity to visit Holocaust-related sites throughout Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. Megan also used the grant money to purchase class sets of Holocaust literature resources for her school. Megan was named a Museum Teacher Fellow for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in 2016 and has spent extensive time at the USHMM learning from world-renowned historians, authors, and survivors. Helberg saw a lack of exposure in her small town, so she founded a travel club for the school and community members to travel together and bridge the gap. Megan has spent time in Rwanda studying the 1994 genocide, and most recently, stayed in the Amazon rainforest forest living with an indigenous tribe. Megan brings her stories and experiences from her travels back to her classroom in Burwell, Nebraska. A central mantra in Mrs. Helberg's classroom is, "Look for the good: in others, in your community, and in yourself. If you do not see any good, then go CREATE it."

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Nebraska Teacher of the Year



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QUOTES FROM MEGAN

“ I strive to strengthen and improve the teaching profession by looking for the good and sharing my knowledge, especially about Holocaust and genocide education with students and teachers.”

“ My biggest accomplishment in education has been exposing my students to people, places, and events they would not have access to except through my classroom. I feel it is my responsibility to bring the world to my students. I must keep taking steps to accomplish the ultimate goal of reaching the entire community about various races, religions, and ways of life.”

PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY

Nebraska Department of Education

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The National Teacher of the Year Program is run by the Council of Chief State School Officers.



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English Teacher

Burwell Jr.-Sr. High School

Burwell, Nebraska

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS



BRINGING THE WORLD TO YOUR CLASSROOM

Nebraska, "The Good Life". Yes, it truly is wonderful but have you ever wanted your students to have a greater world view? Growing up in rural Nebraska, Megan understands the limited exposure many students face in our state—at no fault of their own. Living in a rural area does not mean our students (or teachers!) are any less eager to learn. They simply need opportunities to learn, see, and do outside of their neighborhoods and state lines. Megan has successfully implemented a thriving global education model at her school in the Sandhills of Nebraska. This workshop reveals how Megan incorporates the strands of the English Language Arts standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Multiple Literacies, into global education units that are impactful and encourage students to break down stereotypes and increase empathy.



THE WRITING ROUTINE

Would you like to hear cheers instead of groans when you announce a writing assignment to your students? Megan has developed a ten-step writing routine to ensure students will successfully master the five-paragraph essay. The writing routine gives students the flexibility and freedom to let their unique style shine, but also provides a step-by-step process for students to follow. The writing routine is a good fit for essays that desire to describe, inform, persuade, or entertain. Students have an increased confidence after successfully learning the writing routine. The Writing Routine workshop is best suited for grades 5-12.



TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust can be a daunting subject matter for teachers to approach in their classrooms. Preparing to teach about the Holocaust needs to be done with great care and a solid foundation of knowledge in order to effectively present the information to students. Most teachers mean well when teaching about the Holocaust, however, often do not achieve the intended outcome. This workshop provides teachers with incredibly practical and useful tips to implement immediately into Holocaust units in the fields of Social Studies and English, grades 6th-12th. Educators will leave this workshop with a sense of confidence, increased depth of understanding, and access to quality resources to appropriately teach the Holocaust in their schools. Megan has been trained by the world's leaders in Holocaust education through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

LOOKING FOR THE GOOD: IMPROVING CLASSROOM AND TEACHERS' LOUNGE CULTURE

We all know that teacher. Oh my gosh--am I that teacher? How can the school community turn a negative culture into a more positive culture? Let's be the state that praises and focuses on success. Teachers must be willing to shift their mindset. "The good life" is not for a certain group of elite students, teachers, or community members; "the good life" is for ALL. Life isn't always easy, but gosh, isn't it so much better when we focus on the good? This workshop is inspired by Megan's transformational trip to Rwanda observing how the population, who has gone through much pain, continues to find joy. Humorous and heart-wrenching stories, and practical strategies to give "looking for the good" a try in school will be shared so we do not end up being that teacher.